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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CHINA VISIT

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus news coverage November 20 on U.S. President Barack Obama's China visit and Taiwan's reactions to the joint statement inked by Obama and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao on November 17; on developments in cross-Strait relations; and on the year-end city mayors' and county magistrates' elections around the island. Several papers also reported on Obama's exclusive interview with China's "Nan Fang Zhou Mo" (Southern Weekly) published on November **¶19.**

¶2. Editorials and op-ed pieces in Taiwan's papers continued to discuss the Obama-Hu joint statement and the reasons why the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) was not mentioned in the statement. A column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized Obama for acting too submissively to China. A separate "Liberty Times" op-ed and two op-ed pieces in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said Taiwan has been severely harmed and marginalized by the U.S.-China joint statement. An "Apple Daily" column and an op-ed in the China-focused "Want Daily" both said Obama has returned to the United States without anything from this Asia trip, while an op-ed in the KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed current U.S.-China relations and the impact of the U.S.-China joint statement on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. End summary.

A) "Bowing Diplomacy"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] wrote (11/20):

"[U.S.] President Barack Obama's trip to Asia this time has triggered huge controversy and repercussions in the United States. He not only bowed too humbly to Japan's Emperor, making the American people feel displeased, but also, to everyone's surprise, said in Beijing that [he] welcomed authoritarian China to increase its global influence -- a move that humiliated the democratic United States. Even the Washington Post, which has always been supportive of Obama, has stepped forward to attack [Obama's] move as being indiscreet.

"Obama dared not exert pressure on China to appreciate the Renminbi, allowing China to continue manipulating the exchange rate, which would result in China having stronger competitiveness to defeat U.S. products and thus causing Washington's trade deficit with Beijing to keep rising. It is true that the United States has been severely traumatized by the financial storm, and China is on the rise. But there is still a great gap between the two in their national strength. Of course the United States should attach great importance to China's presence and influence, but it really does not need to act so submissively by not daring to insist on its principles in front of China. . ."

B) "What Is It That Ma Is so Happy about in the Obama-Hu Meeting?"

Joseph Wu, a research fellow at National Chengchi University's Institute of International relations and Taiwan's former representative to the United States, opined in the pro-independence

"Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] (11/20):

"... The aspects that deserve Taiwan's attention include: Obama did not mention Taiwan at all in his Tokyo speech; during his 'town hall' meeting in Shanghai, he only mentioned the three [U.S.-China] communiqués but avoided talking about China's military threats and the United States' commitment on arms sales [to Taiwan]; in the press conference following the Obama-Hu meeting, even though Obama mentioned the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in tandem with the three U.S.-China communiqués, he also talked about respecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity; in the joint statement [with China], Obama did not talk about TRA, but he mentioned twice mutual respect for [China's] sovereignty and territorial integrity and that [he] 'looks forward to efforts by both sides to increase dialogue and interactions in economic, political, and other fields.' ...

"The TRA is a U.S. law, in which Section 4 talked about that, even in the absence of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the United States, whenever U.S. laws refer or relate to foreign countries, nations, states, governments or similar entities, such terms shall include and [such laws] shall apply with such respect to Taiwan -- namely, Taiwan is treated as a de facto independent nation. In the 1982 Six Assurances, the United States also did not recognize China's sovereignty over Taiwan. These two documents are the most important foundations that hold together the relations between Taiwan and the United States.

Yet in the U.S.-China joint statement, when China emphasized that 'the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity,' the United States and China, surprisingly, 'reiterated respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and neither side supports any attempts by any force to undermine this principle.' Obviously, the U.S.-China joint statement has exceeded

the authority of the TRA and the content of the Six Assurances. Given such a situation, the status whereby Taiwan is regarded as a de facto independent [state] has suffered a strong impact. ... In addition, prior to the Obama-Hu meeting, Beijing had privately expressed hope that the United States would support cross-Strait dialogue, in an attempt to seek the United States' approval to squeeze Taiwan into the 'one China' framework, thus creating an international climate favorable for China's [push for] political talks across the Taiwan Strait and also reducing Taiwan's [room to maneuver]. Such a development has of course put Taiwan in an unfavorable position!

"Indeed, the Obama-Hu meeting is a great victory for China in terms of its foreign relations. But when we look back at Taiwan itself: given that the Ma administration has already accepted 'one China' and torn down Taiwan's last line of defense -- its 'democracy,' [how can] we demand that the United States not accept China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan, except to swallow the bitter fruits of the Obama-Hu meeting?"

C) "Obama Returns [to the United States] Empty-handed"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (11/20):

"... There are a lot of things that the United States hopes China will do, but there is little that it can offer to China. This is the reality, and, in fact, Obama really does not have any bargaining chips to exert pressure on China. When [former U.S. Presidents] Bill Clinton and George W. Bush delivered speeches in China in the past, they both spoke loudly of the values of democracy and human rights, and, eventually, Beijing would always release some dissidents or make concessions in other areas. But this time Obama did not even dare talk about [these matters]. ... It is not because Taiwan-U.S. relations have improved, but because Taiwan has become an internal issue of China so Obama did not mention Taiwan during this trip. While the KMT and Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs are feeling good about themselves, Beijing has reaped a major harvest."

D) "Obama Is Utterly Routed, While Taiwan Is Bitterly Injured"

Professor Edward Chen from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily"

[circulation: 520,000] (11/20):

"Under the financial pressure of mainland China, it looks as if the Obama administration has thrown away its helmet and coat of mail and been utterly routed during the negotiating process with the Beijing government this time. Judging from the content of the China-U.S. joint statement, it is a success for Beijing in terms of its negotiating skills and word games and a major victory in terms of its foreign relations. ... In the 'China-U.S. Joint Statement,' Washington said it would adhere to the one China policy and abide by the principles stipulated in the three U.S.-China communiqués, and again the TRA has 'vanished.' This indicated that the TRA, which is originally a U.S. domestic law and is thus of the highest rank, has become something dispensable that can disappear or re-appear. Over time, the TRA will fade away eventually.

"Second, Obama not only 'welcomes peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait' but also 'looks forward to efforts by both sides to increase dialogue and interactions in economic, political, and other fields.' This indicated that Washington has not only endorsed the 'peaceful development' policy mainland China has been advocating in the recent years, which carries the implication of 'peaceful unification,' but has also further played the role of facilitating political and military talks [across the Taiwan Strait]. It is questionable whether such [a position] would violate the sixth assurance in the 'Six Assurances' made by President Ronald Reagan not to pressure both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to enter into negotiations. Third, the greatest harm to Taiwan's national interests is the fact that Washington and Beijing have agreed to 'reiterate respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity is at the core of the three U.S.-China joint communiqués which guide U.S.-China relations.' In fact, no U.S. president has ever said anything about 'respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity,' so how could Obama 'reiterate' it?

"Given that Washington respects Beijing's sovereignty and territorial integrity, it is certain that Washington will not be able to present its own views on cross-Straight issues from a vantage point, let alone play the role of a mediator, supervisor, or one who provides guarantees. ... As a result, the respect Obama has shown for Beijing is the 'disrespect' he has shown to our country. Even though China-U.S. relations will be strengthened because of Obama's remarks about 'respect,' cross-Straight relations will likely be endangered, and the mutual trust between Taiwan and the United States will thus likely be reduced. Are these the developments that

Hu Jintao and Obama are really happy to see? ..."

E) "Obama Visits China, and Taiwan Is Marginalized"

Emerson Chang, Director of Nan Hua University's Department of International Studies, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (11/20):

"... In the joint statement, Obama and Hu Jintao both reiterated 'respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity is at the core of the three U.S.-China joint communiqués which guide U.S.-China relations.' Since whenever Beijing mentions its 'sovereignty and territorial integrity' in its documents, it always talks about the 'Anti-Secession Law' or words like 'deterring splitist activities for Taiwan independence.' At the same time, Obama's declaration was akin to announcing that the United States respects China's position to oppose Taiwan independence. The harm that Obama's declaration has done to Taiwan has surpassed that caused by [President Bill] Clinton's policy of 'not supporting Taiwan independence' and turned a blind eye to the reasons why [President George W.] Bush was opposed to the 'Anti-Secession Law.' Also, it has violated the statement in the TRA that 'any attempt to resolve Taiwan's future in a non-peaceful way will be regarded as threats to the peace and stability in the West Pacific region.' The afore-mentioned declaration by Obama is inconsistent with the content of [the United States'] one China policy on 'peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.' ...

"All these signs showed that China has secured a magnificent victory in terms of the Taiwan issue; it has also made great progress in terms of China-U.S. relations. Further, Obama's intent to procrastinate on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan has become more evident

following his visit to China. The alleviated tensions across the Taiwan Strait have conveniently provided him with an excuse to temporarily freeze U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. ..."

F) "Behind the Sino-U.S. Joint Statement: Will Beijing Propose a Limit on [U.S.] Arms Sales to Taiwan?"

Chiu Kun-hsuan, Director of National Chengchi University's Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/20):

"... Judging from a positive perspective, [the U.S.-China joint statement] can be interpreted as Washington showing approval of the Taiwan government's efforts over the past year to ease cross-Strait tensions. But what we should pay more attention to is that in the wake of the improved cross-Strait relations, whether [or not] Beijing will use the August 17 communique as a precedent to request that the United States limit or even stop its arms sales to Taiwan. ..."

G) "China, the United States Enter an Era of 'Cooperation and Competition'"

Chen Yu-chun, a Taiwan academic now working as a senior research fellow at China's Tsinghua University, opined in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (11/20):

"... The United States has been consistent in its Taiwan policy, and Obama still used the one China [policy], the three communiques and the 'Taiwan Relations Act' as the foundation of the U.S. policy toward China. But the Obama administration had a new way of saying it, such as 'respecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity,' 'strong committed' to supporting one China, 'proactively encouraging political dialogue across the Taiwan Strait,' and also agreeing to the statement proposed by Hu Jintao to 'respect each other's core interests and major concerns.' These wordings are worth pondering and deserve Taipei's attention. The TRA is the legal foundation for U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and thus a strategic pawn for the United States, so there is no way the United States will abandon it. Beijing is always opposed to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and it never acknowledges the TRA. As a result, Beijing and Washington just put aside their disputes, while [the TRA] will remain an unexploded bomb between the two nations. In order to prevent the arms sales issue from becoming a major hurdle in China-U.S. relations, the China-U.S. 'August 17 Communique' can thus become a tool for maneuvering. The United States expects both sides of the Taiwan Strait to strengthen their political and economic dialogue and is happy to see improved cross-Strait relations. Has [such a statement] foreshadowed something about [U.S.] arms sales [to Taiwan]?"

H) "Signals Brought along by Obama"

Associate Professor Tao Yi-feng from National Taiwan University's Department of Political Science opined in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (11/20):

"... As expected, Obama took advantage of his rhetoric and performance skills that he is best at during this trip to Asia to try his utmost to show [the world that] he is 'the United States' first Asia-Pacific president' by emphasizing that the United States will continue 'participating in Asia.' But in terms of 'counterbalancing China,' it is obvious that he has stepped out of the Cold War thinking and started to seek changes. ...

"But the question is that China does not intend to step out of Cold War thinking. ... China is still using the zero-sum logic of 'its army will move forward when its enemy is retreating' in response to the U.S. policy change. ..."

I) "[Travelling] in a Low-Profile Manner, [Obama] Has Achieved Nothing"

Columnist Ku Er-teh opined in the China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] (11/20):

"... During his trip this time, Obama is trying to create the image of a gentle friend by avoiding touching too much on issues that

Beijing cares about most. Thus, he only briefly touched on issues such as human rights, Tibet and Taiwan. ... Obama has reaped a limited harvest during this low-profile trip to Asia. ... Obama's low-profile manner [contrasted by] Hu Jintao's powerful response, has, in return, resulted in criticism of Obama in the United States. Should such a development cause the hawks' power to rise, it will be unfavorable for cooperation between the two nations. ..."

STANTON